

it must suffer through terrorist attacks orchestrated by those who continue to deny its right to exist.

And yet Israel endures and it flourishes. It has made its part of the desert bloom. It is a model of democracy that the rest of that region would do well to emulate, and it has been a great partner to us in the war on terror, cooperating with us on homeland security matters so that we can be better prepared to counter the kinds of attacks that the Israelis have had to endure for three generations.

I've had the privilege of visiting Israel on two separate occasions, experiences that I will never forget.

And to Israel I say, "Le Chaim."

RECOGNIZING ISRAEL'S 60TH ANNIVERSARY

(Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, I too rise to recognize the 60th anniversary of the independence of the State of Israel, and to reaffirm the steadfast friendship between our two strong democratic nations.

Sixty years ago today, on May 14, 1948, the State of Israel declared sovereignty and independence as a homeland for the Jewish people. With little resources and seemingly insurmountable obstacles, Israel has become a thriving and prosperous democracy, and has made worldwide contributions in technology, medicine, agriculture and environmental innovation.

When we speak about Israel, too often we focus on Israel's troubles and not on her beauty and her spirit. But what I want to focus on today is her resolve. Since independence, Israel has continually overcome every conceivable roadblock. She has beaten back hostile neighbors during war, and now endures terrible emotional and economic hardship from terrorist cowards who perpetrate hideous violence against innocent victims.

As a critical partner in the fight against terror, and as the only democracy in the region, Israel's strength and security is paramount. Therefore, I encourage this House to continue to pass bipartisan bills in support of Israel and her ability to protect herself from antagonistic neighbors.

The blossoming of a nation that grew from desert sand into a thriving example of democracy, economic progress and cultural diversity is a magnificent achievement for this strong and vibrant country.

I congratulate Israel on all she has achieved in just 60 years, and I look forward to a bright future for this extraordinary nation.

□ 1945

HALLIE ELIZABETH POE—NEW TEXAN

(Mr. POE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. POE. Mr. Speaker, as the sun came up this morning bringing a new spring day in America, a new Texan was born at 8:27 a.m. and took her first breath of life. Hallie Elizabeth Poe, a 7-pound, 19½-inch girl was born in The Woodlands, Texas.

Hallie's parents, Kurt and Suzy, are happy with boastful pride, but they can't be prouder than I am because I'm the grandfather!

The miracle of birth is the Good Lord's gift to the people of the world and renews a spirit of hope and freshness. A baby girl is one of the most amazing miracles of life, one of the great joys of life, and one of the reasons why there is a little extra sunshine, laughter, and happiness in life.

Little girls are special. They bring a delight and innocence into the world of ours. I know that Hallie will have the forcefulness of Margaret Thatcher and the southern grace of Lady Bird Johnson.

Mr. Speaker, we pause for this moment in time for this most happy of all events, the birth of a new baby girl.

So there's a new yellow rose in Texas tonight that will obviously bring more warmth and beauty to our world. After all, Mr. Speaker, there is nothing like a little girl.

And that's just the way it is.

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

MERIDIA INITIATIVE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. POE. Mr. Speaker, as a former prosecutor and long-time judge in Texas, I'm concerned about, of course, drugs and corruption, especially on the international border between the United States and Mexico. I have great sympathy and compassion for the Mexicans living just south of the border, especially those that have had the problem of dealing with the drug cartels. It's an epidemic that occurs on our southern border with Mexico.

According to the DEA, 500 people were murdered in Nuevo Laredo recently. Most of those cases were never solved, and many of those individuals were peace officers. There have been 400 kidnappings in Nuevo Laredo; 41 of them were Americans, and none of them, not one of those cases, have ever been solved. And we understand now that behind most of those crimes of violence of murder and kidnappings are the drug cartels. What you might be surprised, Mr. Speaker, to find out is that many of those people involved in the drug cartels are former individuals in the Mexican military that were trained in the United States.

The Department of Homeland Security has reported that in the last 10 years also, there have been 250 documented cases of incursions by suspected Mexican military units into the United States. Most of them in Texas, California, and Arizona. Recently, I have been in a place called Neely Pass in Hudspeth County where the Mexican military was photographed coming into the United States.

In order to gain control of access corridors into the United States, drug cartels are hiring hit men from the elite Mexican military force, and this group is known as the Zetas. The Zetas are military deserters that are trained in the United States at the School of the Americas in Fort Benning, Georgia, as an elite force of anti-drug commandos. But unfortunately, after they were trained by Americans, they went over to the dark side. They were sent by the Mexican government to the U.S.-Mexico border to combat drug trafficking, but they switched sides, deserted the Mexican military, and worked for the drug cartels. Officials suspect that there are more than 200 Zetas, including former Mexican police officers.

And the problem isn't just at the border, either. The Zetas operate in the United States. Authorities have believed that the drug cartels and the Zetas are responsible for murders in the United States.

And there's a second group. The second group is called the Kaibiles. The Kaibiles were a special operations force in the Guatemalan military. Like the Zetas, many of them received training in the United States in counter-insurgency operations. And like the Zetas, many of them deserted the special forces and began to help the drug cartels.

Mr. Speaker, I have here a photograph taken by sheriff's deputies on the Texas-Mexico border, and this is a group of the Kaibiles. You notice they are all in uniform; they all have hoods on them. You notice the first person in the front is carrying an AK-47, and they're bringing cocaine into the United States in backpacks, and this is what has happened to these individuals that were trained in the United States and switched sides.

Now, the reason I bring all of this up, Mr. Speaker, is there is an initiative called the Meridia Initiative where the United States government is proposing to send \$1.5 billion in training and equipment south of the American border into Mexico to help combat drug trafficking. While this may sound well and good, unfortunately, the truth of the matter is that we cannot trust the local officials on the Mexican side of the border because of the high rate of corruption because of these individuals that continue to switch sides. And it would be very unfortunate indeed if we sent equipment to the northern portion of Mexico, south of the American border, turned over this military equipment to the Mexican military to have it used against us as shown in this photograph.